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SUBJECT: SPLM Appeals for Funds, Outlines Efforts for Darfur
Conference

Ref: Khartoum 900

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Summary

11. (SBU) Summary: The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) initiative to organize a conference of various Darfur factions faces significant logistical and financial obstacles but is moving forward. In several meetings in Juba, members of the SPLM's Task Force on Darfur (TFD) provided a detailed overview of their efforts to date, and appealed to donors to respond urgently to SPLM appeals for financial and "in kind" assistance. End Summary.

Financial Crisis

12. (SBU) Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) Minister of Presidential Affairs Dr. Luka Biong, along with members of the TFD, met with Acting CG Juba at his office June 7. Embassy Khartoum Poloff also attended. TFD chair Clement Janda said the task force had reached a critical point in the effort to mobilize resources. The TFD's difficulties come against the backdrop of a broader GOSS financial crisis. At the meeting, mission officers reviewed potential USG assistance, including the provision of prefab office space, internet connectivity and a small amount of office equipment. Mission officers also described, without making any promises, potential USG assistance with food, lodging and airplane tickets. Washington was considering the approval of USD 30,000 in emergency assistance for airline travel within the region. TFD Secretary Deng Akol promised to provide a list of delegates requiring air transportation to ConGen Juba on June 8.

13. (SBU) UNMIS has provided good support for TFD movements within Sudan, Janda reported. The Norwegians signed a contract to provide USD 150,000 to the TFD for both the preparatory meeting and the conference. Otherwise, the TFD has received no tangible support despite long dialogues with various donors. Biong added that UN Envoy Jan Eliasson had promised GOSS President Salva Kiir that the UN would provide support, but that other than UNMIS transportation assistance, no help has been forthcoming. Janda acknowledged that the budgets his task force has prepared are not perfect. He stressed that this is an "emergency" initiative, and said the TFD welcomes "in-kind" assistance channeled directly from donor to vendor. He urged donors to fund what they deem sensible and necessary, but to do so quickly.

Moving Forward with Preparatory Conference

¶4. (SBU) Biong directed the TFD to issue invitations to the preparatory committee meeting scheduled to begin on Monday, June 11. The purpose of the meeting is to make specific plans for the conference and coordinate donor assistance, TFD members reiterated. TFD members said they expected representatives from the UN, US, EU and the Juba-based, multilateral Joint Donor Team (JDT). They were not certain whether representatives of the Moi Institute, including retired general Lazarus Sumbeiywo, would attend. Sumbeiywo was chief mediator in the talks that led to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and has been proposed as a mediator or facilitator in the SPLM conference. TFD reps said the also hoped to bring Eritrean official Yemane Gharaeb to the conference. A representative of the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD) is expected to arrive in Juba on June 11, and will likely attend.

¶5. (SBU) TFD members stressed that they need funds soon for accommodating and feeding up to 20 participants in the preparatory conference. More critical, however, is securing funds for the conference, targeted to begin June 18 in Rumbek--a venue that the TFD says still should not be publicly disclosed. TFD reps promised to provide quotations for accommodation for participants in the preparatory conference. Noting the TFD's lack of internet access, Acting CG offered to assist in obtaining quotations for accommodating 150-200 people in Rumbek.

SPLM's Focus

¶6. (SBU) The size of the proposed conference could be a problem for donors, Poloff advised Biong. Biong replied that although civil society leaders, women's groups, traditional leaders and others have been invited, the focus remains on bringing together the political and military leadership of both signatories and non-signatories of

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the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), and the development of a common negotiating position for the non-signatories with the Government in Khartoum.

¶7. (SBU) Janda expressed frustration over demands for a roadmap or similar document describing where the talks are headed. It is wrong to set pre-conditions, he asserted, and impossible at this juncture to "define outcomes." Janda also said he is tired of being asked where SPLM will "hand the file" once the conference ends. Let the parties decide, he argued. Biong acknowledged there are concerns about Eritrea's future role, but said the views of the parties should be taken into consideration. The SPLM would dispatch a representative to remain in Asmara until the Darfur groups gathered there were ready to move to Juba, Janda said.

The SPLM's RSVP List

¶8. (SBU) On June 6, TFD member James Kok provided Acting CG with a detailed overview of TFD efforts to date and summarized the commitments the SPLM believes it has from various groups to participate. Although some of this information has been previously reported, it is worth repeating--and cross-checking.

¶9. (SBU) In their May 22-24 visit to Ndjamena, Kok said, he and TFD chair Janda had met with Tajudeen Bashir Nyam, a former SPLA soldier now with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Tajudeen was accompanied by "two commanders", Kok said, and agreed to attend the SPLM conference. The TFD reps also met with Ahmed Abdelshafie and "three commanders." Abdelshafie promised to attend, Kok claimed, and subsequently traveled to Kampala to await a summons to Juba. Also in Ndjamena, the TFD met with Musa Tajudeen of the SLA Unity Wing. Musa Tajudeen was accompanied by five commanders, Kok said, and agreed that his group would be represented at the conference. Subsequent to the meetings in Chad, SLA Unity Wing leader Mohammed Abdul Yahya traveled to Asmara, where he again met with SPLM reps.

¶10. (SBU) In Asmara on May 31, Kok said, the TFD met with nine Darfur groups. Eritrean officials Yemane Gharaeb and Abdel Jabr facilitated the meeting, but bowed out once it started. The TFD had initially expected to meet the groups separately, Kok said, but Yemane advised that the "situation was improving" and recommended that the TFD engage the groups collectively. Kok claimed that Yamani also assured the TFD that Eritrea had brought the groups to Asmara to "work toward the Juba meeting." A total of 27 Darfur representatives attended the meeting, Kok reported. Only Khamis Abdullah was missing, in a meeting with "the Norwegians." The SPLM was nevertheless able to meet with Khamis the following day, and according to Kok, Khamis and all the other Darfurians in Asmara agreed to attend the SPLM's conference. Kok cited specifically JEM, the "National Redemption Front for Development," SLA factions, the Sudan Federal Democratic Alliance, and a representative of Ahmed Diraig. The Darfurians nevertheless urged the SPLM to push the date of the conference back, and on this basis the target date was shifted from June 11 to June 18.

¶11. (SBU) Finally, in separate meetings, TFD member Edward Lino reports that he is "confident" the notorious janjaweed leader Musa Hilal will accept the invitation to attend the conference. Lino also claims that the "paramount chief of the (Arab) Rizeigat" tribe will attend. And with respect to the much-debated issue of whether Abdul Wahid al-Nur will attend, Lino claimed that he had "talked to him twice and he's coming."

Comment

¶12. (SBU) The SPLM's efforts to put together this conference must overcome considerable challenges. They will need significant material and advisory assistance in order to succeed. The preparatory conference on June 11 and 12 will provide an opportunity to refine its plans in consultation with the US, UN, CHD and others. ConGen Juba will also work to organize an informal meeting in Juba chaired by the UN (and, if they're here, the AU), to coordinate support for the SPLM. End Comment.